

HAITI: THE NEED FOR A STRONGER APPROACH

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

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ABSTRACT

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The Caribbean island of Hispaniola stands out amongst island-countries not only because it is home to two countries, but according to the United Nations 2007/2008 Human Development Index, both the Dominican Republic (DR) and Haiti occupy widely different tiers of the economic spectrum. Haiti is not only the least developed country in the Americas, it also has a history of political dictatorships and social turmoil that have obliged the international community to intervene on a regular basis.

Considering the economic possibilities demonstrated by its Dominican neighbor, its proximity to the US market, its receipt of considerable financial assistance funneled through bilateral agreements and multinational organizations, and its need for repeated interventions by the United States and the U.N. in the past 15 years, why has Haiti's general condition continued to deteriorate? This SRP therefore explores the causes of Haiti's plight. It identifies weaknesses in the U.N. strategy to stabilize Haiti and proposes changes to enable the current strategy to create a stable and secure Haitian environment.

HAITI: THE NEED FOR A STRONGER APPROACH

Judging by the tumultuous events that have plagued Haiti over the past 15 years, it is apparent that the international community's timid response had limited effect addressing the deeply rooted problems of Haiti's political instability, institutional corruption, and widespread poverty. This SRP explores the efforts underway by the United Nations (U.N.) to bring security and development to this troubled country. It concludes with recommendations for a more successful strategy.

The Long Road to Instability

Like many of its neighbors, Haiti served as a colonial hub of the slave trade. However, unlike its neighbors, Haiti was able to revolt and break its links with its colonial masters, thereby becoming the first black independent country on 1 January 1804.¹ One would assume that this newly found freedom from colonialism would allow Haiti to prosper. Instead, the leaders of the revolution imposed "an iron-fisted caste system upon the country".² So, since its creation the political and economic elites have tended to behave more "as protection rackets than as custodians of the public good".³ This perpetuated an environment of conflict between Haiti's privileged minority and the impoverished majority; it promoted the use of violence as an acceptable engine to force political change or to maintain the status quo.⁴

Notwithstanding that the most recent elections in 2006 were hailed as a success, the legacy of successive failing governments has created numerous challenges preventing any democratic reforms to take hold. Although most of the new ministers following the 2006 elections are technically competent, they lack the benefit of inheriting a properly functioning parliamentary system, so they have little experience in the

process of compromise and coalition-building. So they are often unable to reach consensus on key reform issues and to respond to popular economic demands. Their ability to effect the required change is further limited by a poorly trained and corrupt bureaucracy, a complex and ineffective local government system, and a crumbling infrastructure.⁵

The legacy of Haiti's perpetual state of political turmoil has also kept the country at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder. "Haiti's protracted economic decline is the story of rapacious governments and well-intentioned but damaging foreign interventions."⁶ Even the brief economic boom in the 1980s, based primarily on the development of a new Haitian export assembly industry that was promoted by international financial institutions (IFI), failed to provide long-term benefits to the country because it relied too heavily on the U.S. market and eventually fell victim to U.S. import quotas and consumer preferences. Despite declining returns, IFIs continued to advocate assembly export. They naïvely believed that dictators and the exploitative elite would implement policies that would eventually erode their power as a better educated and more skilled workforce resisted their oppression. Their successive international sanctions against the military government that overthrew President Aristide and then against Aristide's second administration shocked the already fragile economy. During that time, nearly 90 percent of Haiti's industrial sector was destroyed, the country became a net importer of agricultural products, and wealth became even more concentrated in a smaller percentage of the population. By 2002, the richest 4 percent of the population controlled 66 percent of the country's assets. However, since Aristide's departure in 2004, there have been several encouraging signs. The Interim Government

in power from 2004 to 2006 imposed much needed fiscal and budgetary discipline and transparency. It also met International Monetary Fund (IMF) criteria for loan financing. Thankfully, the Préval government that was elected in 2006 carried on with the same policy framework. By the end of 2007, the economy had grown by 2.5% to 4% and inflation had shrunk from 43% to 10%.⁷

However, it remains clear that in spite of these promising indicators, by any measure Haiti remains in a dire situation and the international community needs to maintain its presence to implement much needed reforms and projects.⁸ The Human Development Report which combines measures of life expectancy, literacy, and income, ranked Haiti 146th of 177 countries in 2007/2008.⁹ With a foreign debt of \$1.3 billion¹⁰, with two thirds of its population without formal employment,¹¹ and with half of its adult population illiterate¹², Haiti's prospects for economic development in the short term are limited. Only major investments, in both infrastructure and human capital, can improve its long-term outlook. Furthermore, Haiti's persistently high annual inflation rate (8.9% for 2008¹³) further aggravates the hardships and frustrations of a population whose overwhelming majority is poor (three-quarters of Haitians live on less than \$2 per day, over half on less than \$1 per day).¹⁴ Finally, although 60% of the population lives in rural areas¹⁵ scraping a living from subsistence farming, as mentioned earlier, Haiti is now a net importer of agricultural products. This situation was caused by the combination of the country's rapid population growth (roughly 2 percent annually)¹⁶ and increasing environmental devastation. Years of over-exploitation by farmers and loggers who sell wood to make charcoal for cooking have left Haiti with only 3 percent of its forest cover, thereby creating massive environmental degradation from erosion of the small layer of

fertile topsoil down the slopes of Haiti's mountains into the sea. Since most fertile land areas are often transformed into slums to accommodate the increasing population, farmers are forced to use hillsides and steep landscapes for agriculture. This has not only reduced the yield of farming crops but left large areas of Haiti looking more like the barren hillsides of Afghanistan, rather than the green tropical forests just across the border in the Dominican Republic.

To make matters worse, other performance indicators are going in the wrong direction. For example, the World Bank's Doing Business database ranked Haiti 139th out of 175 countries on ease of doing business in 2006. And in spite of the continuing presence and assistance of the international community, Haiti's ranking has since fallen to 147th position in 2008, and to 154th (out of 181 countries) in the recently published 2009 report.¹⁷

To alleviate this predicament and keep its economy afloat, Haiti relies heavily on external assistance (approximately \$965 million from July 2004 through March 2006).¹⁸ According to the Inter-American Development Bank, the cash remittance from Haitians living abroad, commonly called the Diaspora, has increased significantly to \$1.65 billion in 2006, and \$1.83 billion in 2007.¹⁹ For comparison, this is more than double Haiti's government budget of \$800 million and equal to 30 percent of the country's GDP of \$5.4 billion.²⁰ This level of dependency is similar to 2000 when Haiti relied on foreign donors to finance up to 60% of its basic operations.²¹

The Haitian Diaspora is more than just the primary source of foreign assistance funding for Haiti, it is also a ready reserve of skilled labor. Unfortunately, it has never been fully exploited domestically due to Haitian legal red tape and bureaucratic

inefficiency that have not only discouraged potential investments but also discouraged the return of skilled and educated expatriates.²²

Through successive years of international intervention, Haiti's dependency on foreign assistance may create a strategic dilemma for the international community. Is long-term assistance helping to rebuild Haiti, or simply building a dependency? If this addiction is allowed to continue without any signs of progress on the horizon, prospects for a stable Haiti are not promising since any reduction in the level of international financial assistance would immediately put unmanageable stress on any Haitian government and simply create an environment ripe for the return of internal conflict.

With all this support and attention from the international community, why does Haiti persist in such poor condition? For the United States Institute of Peace, "the challenge confronting Haiti's government remains that of translating international goodwill and domestic support into constructive government programs".²³ The challenge is also for the international community that relies on the Haitian government to deliver these programs, the same government that has historically been plagued with corruption and incapable of delivering even the most basic of public services and security for its population.

Since the government has historically proven unable to create a stable environment, it is therefore not surprising that it has not been able to provide security for its population, the primary responsibility of any government. Haiti's security apparatus has instead been misused to keep the government in power and the population in check. Abuse and corruption in the police and criminal justice systems remain rampant and further erode the confidence of the population. Even Mario Andresol, the director

general of the Haitian National Police (HNP), confirmed in 2006 that 25 percent of his police force was engaged in criminal activities. Fraud was also prevalent. The UN reported during the same year that only 70 percent of the 8,000 police on the HNP rolls were actually present for duty.²⁴

The Haitian judicial and correctional systems have proven to be as dysfunctional and corrupt as the police. “Judges are untrained, inept, and corrupt; records are not kept, evidence is lost, and few, if any, criminal cases are brought to trial. Prisons are crammed with inmates. In Port-au-Prince, the National Prison is filled to eight times its capacity and less than 10 percent of Haiti’s prisoner population has been convicted and many will never be formally charged”²⁵. Unfortunately, this situation is not likely to change in the short term since many organized gangs and criminals remain free to walk the streets due to the failures of previous security sector reforms²⁶ and the extradition and return of Haitian criminals, who then train recruits for the criminal gangs and organizations of Haiti.²⁷

Notwithstanding these huge security challenges, the problems facing Haiti are not unique amongst third world countries. Today’s globalization gives “every conflict regional and global repercussions”.²⁸ Therefore, considering the large number of poor countries around the globe, why has Haiti been able to continually attract so much attention and support from the international community and, more specifically, from the U.S.?

In accordance with the 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS), the first and probably the most important rationale is that a stable Haiti enhances U.S. national security. The 2002 NSS clearly states that “poverty, weak institutions, and corruption

can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders”.²⁹ These conditions certainly characterize Haiti, and they were subsequently confirmed by the US State Department in 2007 when it reported that Haiti was “a major transit country for cocaine from South America because of its weak institutions, pervasive corruption, and dysfunctional police and judicial systems.”³⁰

The second reason is to protect the health of U.S. citizens from the harmful effects of mass, unregulated migration from Haiti, which remains “a potential source of public health problems, as demonstrated by the prevalence of HIV AIDS in the country.”³¹ An influx of refugees can prove to be a significant challenge, especially during periods of political turmoil. For example, during the unstable period between 1991 and 1994, “the US Navy and Coast Guard intercepted 70,000 Haitian refugees at sea.”³²

The third reason is more altruistic; it was articulated in the 2006 NSS as, “America’s national interests and moral values drive us in the same direction: to assist the world’s poor citizens and least developed nations and help integrate them into the global economy.”³³ As demonstrated during a visit to Haiti in May 2008, the Congressional Black Caucus, which describes its role as the “Conscience of Congress”³⁴ and is influenced by the important African-American voting bloc who form 13.4 percent of the U.S. population,³⁵ remains a strong advocate for support to Haiti. This U.S. national conscience might also compel it to remain engaged in order to rectify its string of policy failures that have contributed to the current mayhem.³⁶

Finally, considering that Haiti is the closest of the world’s poor countries at a mere 600 miles from the Florida coast, the U.S. has more than enough reasons to

focus, customize, and prioritize a large portion of its assistance and development efforts to help Haiti overcome its political, economic, and security challenges.

Are U.S. interests for a stable Haiti shared by the international community? One could argue that the successive deployments of international forces to Haiti over the past 15 years are an indication that the international community also shares some of the same strategic concerns as the U.S. In fact, it was UN Secretary General Kofi Annan during the Haitian crisis who best described the world's interest and responsibility in Haiti:

Haiti is clearly unable to sort itself out, and the effect of leaving it alone would be worsening chaos. Our globalized world cannot afford such political vacuum, whether in the mountains of Afghanistan or on the very doorstep of the sole remaining superpower.³⁷

The Steep Climb to Stability

However, in spite of this international interest, led by the United States, France and Canada, the results leave much to be desired.³⁸ The first UN intervention in Haiti began in 1990 with the establishment of the UN Observer Group for the Verification of the Elections in Haiti (ONUVEH)³⁹. What followed were a successive mix of sanctions and civilian, military and/or police missions that failed to bring lasting peace and security to Haiti.⁴⁰ Finally, on 30 April 2004 the UN Security Council approved the deployment of the ongoing United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).⁴¹ But will the UN succeed this time?

While some may argue that the results in Haiti exemplify the UN's ineffectiveness to deal with instability around the world, it is important to differentiate between the effectiveness of the UN in New York (UNNY) and the UN mission deployed on location (MINUSTAH). Most mission failures in Haiti can be traced to decisions made in UNNY

or by individual nations, either by closing the mission prematurely, or by not giving the mission adequate mandate and/or resources.⁴²

UN missions, with their heavily bureaucratized structures and processes, also share some of the responsibility. However, before assigning blame, we must admit that it is nearly impossible for a multinational mission composed of civilian, military, and police personnel from widely different professional, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds to achieve the unity of thought, purpose and action of an organization created from a single nation. Even if a UN mission were composed of highly interoperable, like-minded multinational forces, their cohesiveness would still be eroded by the variety of national interests and caveats that contributing countries impose on the use their personnel and equipment. If we are willing to accept that the effectiveness of a UN mission is going to be less than optimal, there is no denying that the UN remains one of the most cost-effective organizations for the conduct of peacekeeping operations. For example, the U.S. Government Accountability Office confirmed in its 2006 report that with an annual budget of \$428 million, MINUSTAH was costing half of what it would have cost the U.S. to conduct a similar peacekeeping operation.⁴³ Although MINUSTAH's budget was recently revised upward to \$601 million for the period 1 July 08 to 30 June 09⁴⁴, it is doubtful that a single country could deploy a similar range of capabilities for less cost.

Operating under Chapter VII of the UN Charter⁴⁵, MINUSTAH, with 48 contributing countries, currently fields a total of 9,028 total uniformed personnel (7,009 military troops and 2,019 police), supported by 502 international civilian personnel, 1,197 local civilian staff and 205 Volunteers⁴⁶. Although this Chapter, as in previous mandates, is usually perceived as giving UN authorities and forces on location the required freedom

of action to bring about necessary changes, MINUSTAH is limited to a supporting role. More specifically, the latest UNSC Resolution 1840 confirms the Government of Haiti and its people have primary ownership and responsibility for all aspects of the country's stabilization. It clarifies that MINUSTAH's role is to continue to support the Haitian Government, the HNP, and the people of Haiti in maintaining a secure and stable environment, developing an inclusive political process, fostering good governance, and promoting human rights.⁴⁷

Unfortunately, this type of mandate has seldom been successful in addressing the underlying causes afflicting many failing or failed states, corruption. Continuously sending UN civilian, military, and police to support corrupt governments and institutions is like asking a coach to win games with players that refuse to play by the rules. In the end, the team is penalized and loses. Therefore, in assuming the task of rebuilding a failing or failed state, the UN mandate should have provisions to impose and enforce anti-corruption rules and regulations. Although a supported country that demonstrates a genuine willingness to learn and abide by the rules may not succeed, it will at least set the conditions for building a winning team.

In spite of its weak mandate, MINUSTAH has a distinct advantage over the previous UN missions of the 1990's. It has already been on the ground for over four years, and its mandate was extended until 15 October 2009⁴⁸. Its presence is starting to show positive results.

Diplomatically, Haiti was readmitted into CARICOM in July 2006.⁴⁹ Economically, "following almost 4 years of recession ending in 2004, the economy grew by 1.5% in 2005, 2.5% in 2006, and 3.2 % in 2007" respectively.⁵⁰ Furthermore, in December 2006,

the U.S. Congress adopted the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act, which provides trade preferences for Haiti. This is extremely important for Haiti since textile manufacturing, Haiti's last remaining industry, exports 90 percent of its production (worth \$450 million) to the U.S., which remains Haiti's largest trade partner with bilateral exchanges of more than \$1.3 billion.⁵¹ In addition, the U.S. has vowed to continue its support to improve Haiti's security, promote sustainable economic development, and strengthen fragile democratic processes.⁵² Ultimately, the HOPE Act, combined with other debt forgiveness initiatives by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Paris Club, will provide much needed incentives to the Haitian government to continue to strive for financial independence.⁵³

In spite of recent progress and ongoing goodwill, the lack of an overarching decision-making framework and cohesion within the international community creates its own obstacles and may impede further improvement.⁵⁴ While this lack of coherence allows Haitian politicians to play one donor against another, it is the Haitian bureaucracy that finds itself buried in paperwork because every international and bilateral assistance program has its own application process and accounting system.⁵⁵ This problem is further compounded by Haiti's shortage of qualified bureaucrats and by the dysfunctional institutions in which they operate. In addition to reducing the unmanageable administrative demands that their programs impose, the international community will therefore have to dedicate considerable effort to build the capacity and professionalism of Haiti's public servants, and improve internal controls that will reduce corruption.⁵⁶

Reducing corruption requires effective judicial and security apparatus. However, according to a recent UN report, “the State institutions responsible for guaranteeing respect for the rule of law, including the police, the justice and prison systems, remain particularly weak.”⁵⁷ Since the security sector has historically been the most corrupt sector and has the potential to offset any positive transformation in all other sectors, it is essential that all security sector reforms be underpinned by an effective vetting process for those who will operate within it. Such processes are not new for the UN and could even be modeled on the success of other missions like Kosovo, in which a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between UNMIK, UNOPS, the EU and the U.S. recently established an international process and standard for the vetting and appointment of judges and prosecutors⁵⁸.

Since security reforms must address three interdependent sectors — police, judicial and correctional, they must be well coordinated and performed concurrently. For example, the task of rebuilding the HNP is enormous: It involves recruiting, vetting, and training to fill the ranks of the UN-approved 14,000 police force, along with rebuilding and equipping up to 200 police stations with proper equipment, communication, and vehicles.⁵⁹ If successful, the recruitment and training of professional police officers would most likely reduce the level of crime in the streets. However, this success story would have little value if the judicial and correctional systems have not also been reformed to deal with the increasing number of arrests generated by a more professional and efficient police department. Therefore, the security sector must be viewed as a single system composed of many interlinked components where delays in

reform or the failure of one component to reform can jeopardize the outcome of reforming the entire security system.

Political manipulation will inevitably continue to test these reforms for quite some time. However, the international community must remain vigilant, since Aristide's return looms over the horizon. However, he is probably reluctant to face the criminal charges awaiting his return. Nonetheless, any failures in the current or future administrations may give Aristide an opening. The return of Aristide would undoubtedly throw Haiti back into turmoil.

Of all the threats plaguing Haiti, the most visible and persistent remains Cité Soleil. When the world media turns its attention toward Haiti, usually when it is in turmoil, the stories most often refer, in part or in whole, to the shanty town of Cité Soleil located in the capital city of Port au Prince. Since there are other shanty towns in Port au Prince, such as Martissant, and other equally poor neighborhoods throughout Haiti, why does Cité Soleil attract such a disproportionate amount of media attention? Cité Soleil owes its fame to its location, which gives strategic influence to the criminals of Cité Soleil.

Haiti's national capital in Port-au-Prince has a population of close to 3 million⁶⁰. It is built on the steep slopes of mountains that rise from the shore of a bay in the Gulf of Gonaives. "The city's layout is somewhat similar to that of an amphitheatre; commercial districts are near the water, while residential neighborhoods are located on the hills above."⁶¹ In general, the social and economic status of residents is directly proportional to the location of their residences on the mountain side. That is, the richer residents live higher up the mountain. Based on this description, it is therefore not surprising that Cité

Soleil is located immediately at the bottom of the mountain on the shoreline of the bay. It is not the proximity to the water's edge that gives this shanty town international visibility. First, contrary to other shanty towns, due to the topography of the area, the sound of gunshots fired in Cité Soleil can be easily heard from most major hotels located on the hillside, where most international visitors and journalists reside. More importantly, by analyzing a detailed city map of Port-au-Prince, a trained eye can discern that Cité Soleil sits at the strategic junction of several key infrastructures (see Figure 1).

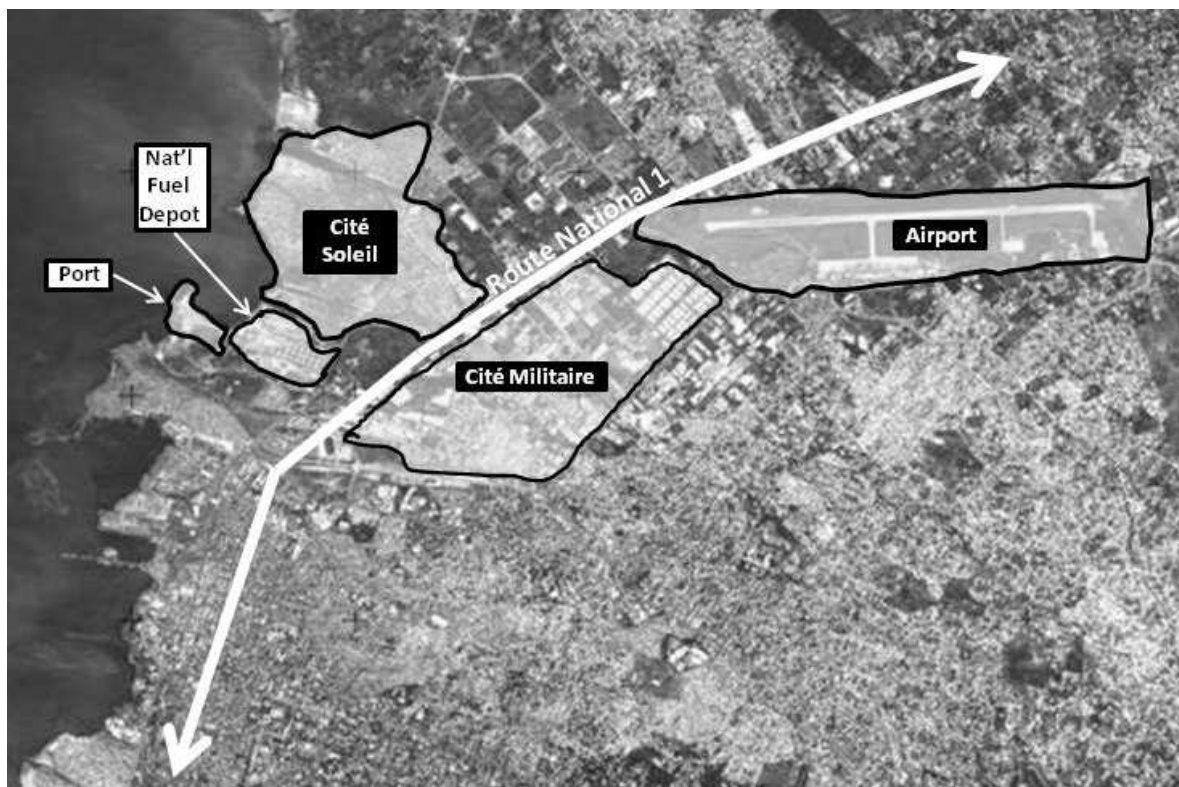


Figure 1. Cité Soleil

To the east, at a short walking distance, is Haiti's international airport terminal. This airport has a single runway oriented East-West, so any aircraft attempting to land from or take-off to the west follows a flight path a few hundred meters over Cité Soleil.

Unrest or shots fired from Cité Soleil can jeopardize aircraft safety and disrupt airport operations. For this reason, airlines that have regular service to Haiti constantly monitor the security situation and cancel flights in reaction to or forecast of potential threats. For example, during the 2006 presidential elections American Airlines cancelled its service to and from Haiti for two days.⁶² Since only a limited number of airlines provide regular service to Haiti, cancellations from the largest carrier can trigger a similar reaction from the other airlines. Therefore gangs in Cité Soleil have the power to effectively cut off one of Haiti's most vital economic links.

Between Cité Soleil and the end of the runway is the main national highway – Route National 1(RN1). Considering that “very few roads in Haiti are paved and the ones that are paved, are generally in a state of disrepair”⁶³, RN1 provides a critical social and economic link to the northern cities of the island. Again, unrest in Cité Soleil can impede traffic and even close the route altogether. This was the case during my deployment in 2005 and 2006 when the gangs of Cité Soleil were frequently stopped vehicles and kidnapped their passengers. Or, even worse, they fired indiscriminately on passing vehicles, causing injuries and even death.

Immediately to the south of Cité Soleil and separated only by a simple brick fence is the nation's fuel storage depot, which is co-located with the Port-au-Prince seaport. Again, in 2005 and 2006, it was not unusual for fuel tankers to refuse to dock for unloading their precious cargo due to shots fired in and around Cité Soleil.

Lastly, to the east, just on the other side of RN1, is Cité Militaire, the capital's main business district, where many of the international and national companies have their manufacturing plants and warehouses. These companies naturally selected this

location due to its close proximity to the port, airport, and national highway.

Unfortunately, these companies and their workforce provide a ready source of funds to the armed gangs of Cité Soleil through various extortion and protection schemes.

A Better Road

Considering the Haitian Government's and the international community's past performances to bring peace and stability to this country, no one could be faulted for looking at the current efforts with a certain degree of skepticism. While the international community must be given full credit for stepping forward, not once, but repeatedly over the past 15 years, they must also shoulder the blame for downsizing and pulling out before real political, social, and economic change could take hold. Therefore any strategy that truly aims to achieve success in Haiti must incorporate several new enabling requirements.

First, since Haiti remains "a poster child for the failure of international interventions in crisis states, largely due to the revolving-door nature of UN missions in Haiti,"⁶⁴ the international community must guarantee its level of efforts over a much longer period by giving MINUSTAH a multi-year mandate. MINUSTAH's most recent mandate is for one year. Similar to the long-term horizons envisioned to rebuild war-torn Japan and Germany half a century ago, rebuilding failing or failed states today must be considered in terms of decades, not months or years. However, as demonstrated by the successive missions deployed in the 1990s, the international community appears to be afflicted by a short attention span, avoiding the difficult commitment to sustain troops and funding over a long period of time.⁶⁵ Furthermore, some countries may be unwilling to associate themselves with a long-term military, police, or civilian presence, which

could trigger the resentment of Haitians.⁶⁶ Regardless of the cause, the reality is that the international climate fluctuates constantly and that the international community must prioritize scarce resources and constantly shift its focus and assistance to respond to emerging conflicts. Unfortunately, the UN Security Council's (UNSC) insistence on approving missions for periods no longer than 12 months exacerbate this shortsightedness. This epidemic of myopic time horizons is not conducive to the development of long-term plans and the implementation of lasting solutions. Therefore, for missions like Haiti, the UN needs to set long-term objectives and approve multi-year mandates to reach them.

The second key requirement is for a stronger UN mandate. The mandate should not only articulate clearly measurable objectives for the transformation and development of social, economic, security and bureaucratic institutions, but also for changes aimed at increasing the fairness and transparency of the democratic process. The mandate should have clear provisions that, under specific conditions, like the failure to curb corruption, the UN would assume governing responsibilities like it did in Kosovo in 1999. Although the circumstances are quite different, the UN must overcome its reluctance to insert itself in the internal affairs of a country, especially when it has intervened previously. Interventions can have unintended long term consequences; a fact acknowledged by President John F. Kennedy, when he asked a critical question: "At what point, for example, does military aid become burdensome to a country and make its freedom endangered rather than helping to secure it?"⁶⁷ However, when a decision has been made to intervene, the UN should not be satisfied with stabilizing a volatile situation so that it can withdraw at the earliest opportunity, leaving the population in the

hands of a corrupt government. Since abuse of authority and corruption has been the *modus operandi* for Haitian governments over the past two hundred years, it is reasonable to assume that it will take more than a couple of years, most likely generations, to establish a culture that respects human rights, and promotes justice and democracy in Haitian society.⁶⁸ Therefore, the mandate needs to be strongly worded in such a manner that it is clear that the UN will remain in Haiti until its objectives are met, and if necessary, that the UN is empowered to act without the approval of the Haitian government.

The third requirement is for an appropriately resourced strategic plan designed to achieve the long-term rebuilding and development objectives of the mandate. A simple Google search for “plan for Haiti” reveals over 13 million websites, articles, and documents. Therefore, with so many plans, why so little progress? In essence, the best-laid plans can fail if insufficient resources are applied. Many donor countries funnel their assistance through NGOs or directly to the Haitian Government to better control their projects. However, considering Haiti’s legacy of corruption, it is fair to assume that a significant portion of the assistance never reaches their intended targets. Therefore, to maximize the impact of the international assistance, countries need to agree to not only funnel their funding through the UN, but to provide funding for the entire period of the mandate.

Even if the strategic plan is properly resourced for the duration of the mandate, it can still fail if improperly executed. Therefore, the fourth requirement is to establish a control structure to streamline decision-making and coordination. The Haitian government and various international organizations have recognized the need for

coordination, but have yet to agree on how to implement it.⁶⁹ The ideal structure would be composed of a coordination centre that empowers a single decision-maker to set priorities. Some have recommended that international assistance be “implemented through the Haitian government whenever possible... instead of channeling assistance exclusively through non-governmental organizations.”⁷⁰ While this recommendation would address the often counterproductive and uncoordinated efforts of NGOs, it would only serve to reinforce Haiti’s pervasive institutional corruption. Instead, since the UN already has the required expertise to establish anti-corruption legislation and control mechanisms, the Special Representative to the Secretary General (SRSG) in Haiti should be assigned responsibility to manage and coordinate funding and developmental projects. A single decision-making authority is particularly important in order to prevent diverging national and organizational interests from conflicting with each other and, more significantly, with the achievement of the mandate. A coordination centre similar to the Joint Operations Centre (JOC) located at the MINUSTAH HQ, which coordinates security forces and reports to directly the SRSG⁷¹, could be established to coordinate all developmental initiatives and projects.

The fifth requirement is for an effective communication and information strategy. It would be foolish to believe that the UN, or any foreign force, could operate effectively and bring about fundamental social, economic, and political changes in Haiti without the ability to communicate with the population, especially if the UN is forced to assume the responsibility to govern. The communication strategy must be supported by adequate communication means to overcome the challenges of a highly illiterate population that has been easily influenced by local rumor networks and disinformation. The population

would be more likely to support transformational initiatives from its government or from an interim UN government if they understand the rationale for the transformation. More importantly, they must be informed of the concrete improvements that government initiatives bring to their daily lives. This could be achieved by broadcasting daily UN information messages through the local TV and radio networks. However, since local communication resources could be compromised during periods of turmoil, the UN would also need to create a parallel radio broadcast network, with stations located and protected in the various UN military camps dispersed throughout the country.

The sixth and final requirement is potentially controversial and is dependent on the successful implementation of the preceding recommendations. However, if done properly, it would have the greatest impact in bringing short- and long-term stability to Haiti. The paralyzing effects on the economy and persistent security threat that Cité Soleil poses must be eliminated. There is no denying that the motivation for criminality emanating from Cité Soleil is poverty. However, when MINUSTAH and various international organizations have developed plans to address Cité Soleil as a security issue, their solutions often focus on increasing police presence and gaining the cooperation of the population in order to allow non-governmental organizations the required maneuver room to move ahead with humanitarian and poverty reduction projects. But because poverty is a long-standing, country-wide problem that will most likely persist in the foreseeable future, these solutions can best be described as short-term fixes.

To fundamentally address the security threat posed by Cité Soleil, the town itself needs to be physically moved away from its strategically important location (See Figure

2). Certainly relocation of a city is a radical measure. But, if done properly, it would not only remove the menacing control that Cité Soleil exercises over the strategically vital junction where air, sea, and land transport converge, but it would also provide Haiti, and more importantly the citizens of Cité Soleil, with long-term social and economic benefits. For example, the town could be rebuilt nearby with better infrastructure and facilities in large empty fields north of the Airport. A well-coordinated plan could ensure that as shacks are destroyed in Cité Soleil, the residents are relocated into newly built and better equipped housing at the new location. The area where the shacks are destroyed could then be turned into a new industrial site where companies could build new facilities.

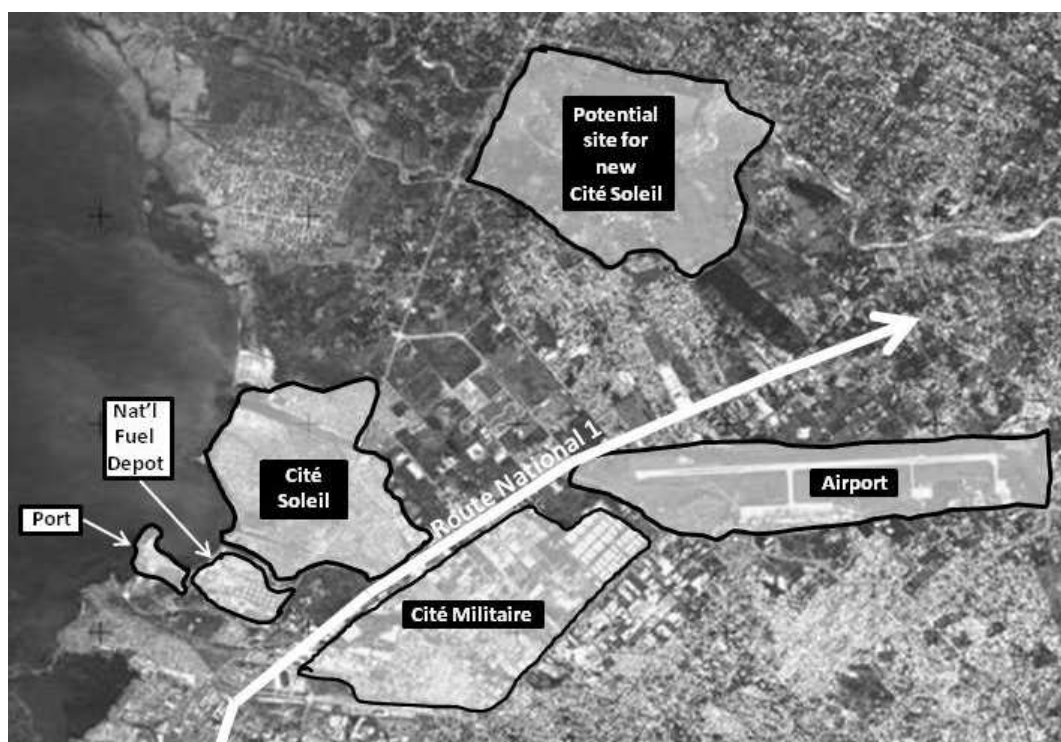


Figure 2. Potential site for new Cité Soleil

The benefits of this approach would not only be felt in the security realm, but would ripple in the humanitarian and economic realms. The residents of Cité Soleil

would not only provide the bulk of the work force to destroy, move, and rebuild a new Cité Soleil, but would also be employed to build and later work in the newly developed business and manufacturing district. This alone would generate much needed income for thousands of Haitians and tax revenues for the government. Furthermore, since the new business district would be located immediately adjacent to the port, airport, and national highway with a ready source of low-wage labor, the Haitian government should find it easier to entice foreign investors to establish new industries. All of this activity would contribute to create the type of social and economic changes that current humanitarian and aid projects have been incapable of delivering.

Conclusion

Throughout its history, Haitian society has demonstrated tremendous resilience in the face of unrelenting adversity. Fuelled by a strong nationalistic pride, this resilience has enabled Haiti to survive. Although it has survived, it has not prospered.

So far, although many countries have tried, they have been unsuccessful in helping Haiti to overcome its legacy of political unrest, rampant poverty, institutional corruption, and crumbling infrastructure. MINUSTAH represents another attempt by the international community to bring good governance, security, and economic improvement to the citizens of Haiti. While this UN Mission is a step in the right direction, it still faces many challenges, some indigenous to Haiti, others resident in the web of international interests. Only time will tell if the international community will have the wisdom and fortitude to give MINUSTAH a stronger mandate with the required tools to implement it and the staying power to see the difficult and lengthy transformational changes to their successful conclusion.

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